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December 4, 1998

Magalie Roman Salas
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

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DEC - 4 1998

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Attention: Amy Zoslov

**Re: Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc. Petition for Waiver Pursuant to
Section 20.18(c) of the Commission's Rules; CC Docket No. 94-102**

Dear Ms. Salas:

Transmitted herewith, on behalf of Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc. ("Advantage") and pursuant to §1.3 of the Federal Communications Commission's ("Commission") rules, are an original and four copies of Advantage's Petition for Waiver of the December 31, 1998 deadline ending the suspension of enforcement of Section 20.18(c) of the Commission's rules, as that section relates to the transmission of 911 calls made from TTY devices using digital wireless systems. The petition contains a facsimile signature. The original signature will be filed with the Commission as soon as it is available.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please communicate directly with the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Bennet

Michael R. Bennet

MRB/jmb
Enclosures

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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

DEC - 4 1998

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
Revision of the Commission's Rules) CC Docket No. 94-102
To Ensure Compatibility with)
Enhanced 911 Emergency)
Calling Systems)

To: Wireless Telecommunications Bureau

**Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc., Request for Waiver
of Section 20.18(c) of the Commission's Rules**

I. Introduction

Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc. ("Advantage"), pursuant to § 1.3 of the Rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC" or "Commission"),¹ hereby requests a limited waiver of the December 31, 1998 deadline ending the suspension of enforcement of Section 20.18(c) of the Commission's Rules, as that section relates to the transmission of 911 calls made from TTY devices using digital wireless systems as set forth in the Commission's November 13, 1998 *Order*.²

Advantage is a small, rural cellular carrier operating in the Tennessee 2-Cannon RSA and headquartered in Alexandria, Tennessee. Advantage's wireless network is both digital and analog and its users have either analog phones or dual-mode analog/digital phones. All of Advantage's phones automatically transmit 911 data over the analog network. Accordingly, Advantage believes that it is in full compliance with Section 20.18(c). However, because

¹47 C.F.R. § 1.3 (1996).

²In the Matter of Revision of the Commission's Rules To Ensure Compatibility with Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems, CC Docket No. 94-102, Order, RM-8143 (rel. November 13, 1998) ("*Order*").

Advantage is incapable of transmitting 911 calls made from TTY equipment over the digital portion of its network (even though the analog capability on all Advantage phones renders such transmission unnecessary), Advantage, out of an abundance of caution, is requesting a waiver of Section 20.18(c).

II. Background

On November 13, 1998, the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau released an *Order* extending through December 31, 1998, the suspension of enforcement of Section 20.18(c) of the Commission's Rules regarding the transmission of 911 calls made from TTY devices using digital wireless systems. While the Commission recognized the difficulties the industry (represented by the Wireless TTY Forum) was experiencing in achieving TTY compatibility with digital systems, the Commission was also concerned about "the significant benefits the requirements established in Section 20.18(c) will provide to individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or who have speech disabilities" and pushed for an interim solution that included this waiver process in order to continue "the process of achieving carrier compliance."³ In the *Order*, the Commission established specific procedures under which wireless carriers subject to the requirements of Section 20.18(c) may petition the Commission for a waiver of those requirements. In accordance with these procedures, what follows are the steps Advantage is taking to provide users of TTY devices with the capability to operate such devices in conjunction with digital wireless phones.

III. Compliance Efforts

Advantage is currently working with its wireless switch manufacturer, Nortel, on a viable

³*Order* at p. 3.

solution to digital 911 for TTY users. Unfortunately, for the time being, it is technically impossible for Advantage to offer TTY access to 911 over the digital wireless portion of its dual-mode system until Nortel makes the appropriate equipment commercially available. While Nortel's equipment is capable of transmitting analog 911 calls, Nortel has yet to develop the equipment necessary to connect with digital wireless handsets and the 911 text message may be corrupted by the consumers' equipment.

Nortel's IS-95 CDMA air interface equipment, in the short term, is incapable of transmitting a 911 call with sufficient error-free text to elicit a proper emergency response. Nortel's IS-136 TDMA air interface equipment is also incapable, in the short term, of transmitting error-free text messages depending upon the type of vocoder used in the system, the type of text message, and the type of handset. In addition, Nortel maintains that industry standards to support TTY operation in digital mode are not currently defined. Nortel has informed Advantage that Nortel Networks is working with other equipment manufacturers to define the standards needed to make the digital service work. A timely compliance solution depends not only upon Nortel's equipment, but also the makers of TTY equipment. Unfortunately, the only impact Advantage has on this process is creating a demand for functional 911/TTY equipment.

Advantage has made quite clear to Nortel the importance of timely compliance with the FCC's rules. However, Nortel has informed Advantage that it may take as long as twelve to eighteen months for a finished product that can accommodate digital TTY use.⁴ Advantage will continue to work with Nortel to develop a system that can work for Advantage's customers.

⁴*See Order* at ¶ 5, footnote 4.

Advantage will keep the Commission informed about its progress. If the equipment manufacturers could be more definite about their solutions, Advantage could provide the Commission with a more definite date when it will be capable of transmitting TTY signals over the digital portion of its network.

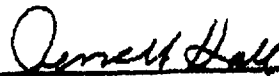
In the meantime, Advantage's analog network is fully capable of sending 911/TTY calls although, at the moment, Advantage has no TTY customers. Advantage will certainly inform any future TTY customers of their options concerning public safety network access over Advantage's network.

Advantage is committed to the safety of its customers who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or who have speech disabilities and will work with these customers to provide them with any technically feasible telecommunications features or information such as ANI or volume control that will allow these users to access the network. Nevertheless, Advantage is in the position of transporting and terminating the signal, not in the position of manufacturing the equipment that carries the signal or the end user equipment. Advantage appreciates the FCC's commitment to solving this industry-wide incompatibility as soon as possible and believes the deadline and subsequent waiver procedure will speed industry compliance. Advantage is aware of its obligation to file a submission every three months if it is unable to implement digital TTY capability and, if granted this waiver, will keep the FCC informed of the progress it has made with its equipment manufacturers toward making digital 911/TTY a reality.

For the foregoing reasons, Advantage submits that the limited waiver requested is in the public interest.

Respectfully submitted,

Advantage Cellular Systems, Inc.

By 
Jernell Hall
Cellular-Marketing Manager

December 4, 1998

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